100 Million American families affected by life-threatening disease may look forward to renewed hope for their loved ones

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(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Albio Sires voted today for the DeGette-Castle Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (H.R.3) that significantly expands federal funding for this potentially life-saving research.

"I was proud to be Speaker of the New Jersey State Assembly when we passed the law that allowed stem cell research opportunities," said Congressman Sires. "I am thrilled to have the chance to move stem cell research forward once again by supporting legislation that will allow federal funding to be used for this exciting area of scientific research."

The DeGette-Castle bill expands the federal funding of embryonic stem cell research by lifting the restrictions on the embryonic stem cell lines which can be used for federally funded research. Most of the stem cell lines previously authorized for research under the President's policy are no longer useful.

H.R. 3 only authorizes federal research funds for stem cell lines generated from embryos that would otherwise be discarded by fertility clinics. This legislation also creates an ethical framework that must be followed in conducting this research under the guidelines of the National Institutes of Health. This bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives in May of 2005 and the U.S. Senate in July 2006, but was vetoed by President Bush.

"Whether it is a family member with Alzheimer's, a neighbor with Parkinson's, or a friend with diabetes, we all know someone who has been touched by disease that could possibly be cured or treated by stem cell derived therapies," said Congressman Sires. "The passing of this bill could potentially give patients a new lease on life, and their families the hope they need to lift their spirits while they continue caring for their infirmed loved ones."

Seventy-two percent of Americans support the expansion of stem cell research. The recent study regarding amniotic fluid stem cells is exciting, but it is critical to remember that every type of stem cell is different and has varying potential for research.